

Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and 66 Tribal Nations

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**1—(Video) Pollution flowing faster than facts in EPA spill, CNN, 8/10/2015**

<http://www.cnn.com/2015/08/10/us/colorado-epa-mine-river-spill/>

The mustard hue of the Animas River in Colorado -- the most visible effect of a mistake by the Environmental Protection Agency that dumped millions of gallons of pollutants into the water -- is striking. Just a glance at a photo of the orange-yellowish slush is enough to know that something seems wrong. Scientists will have to say just how wrong, and possibly dangerous, the contamination is, though five days after the spill answers are few.

**2—Gold mine's toxic plume extends to Utah, USA Today, 8/10/2015**

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2015/08/10/navajo-nation-epa-mine-wastewater-spill/31399517/>

The plume of heavy metals released last week into the Animas River from the Gold King Mine near Silverton, Colo., reached Utah on Monday. As of Monday evening, officials said the plume of contamination was southeast of Montezuma Creek, Utah, and was headed for Lake Powell. Environmental Protection Agency officials say the pollutants in the plume include arsenic, lead, copper, aluminum and cadmium, but have not released any detailed information on the spill that started Wednesday morning and has since been contained.

**3 State of Emergency: Colorado Wastewater Leak Far Exceeds First Estimates, NBC, 8/10/2015**

<http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/colorado-mine-spill-toxic-wastewater-leak-far-exceeds-first-estimates-n407091>

Gov. John Hickenlooper of Colorado declared a state of emergency on Monday, five days after a spill that sent toxic water seeping from an abandoned gold mine and turned a river orange. The Environmental Protection Agency said Sunday that 3 million gallons of wastewater had spilled, three times as much as earlier estimates, and that health risks to humans and aquatic life were not yet clear.

**4—State of emergency in NM, Albo Journal, 8/10/2015**

<http://www.abqjournal.com/626504/news/state-of-emergency-in-nm.html>

Five New Mexico water systems, including those of Aztec and Farmington, continued to rely on reserve storage Monday, five days after a 3 million-gallon spill dumped toxic heavy metals into the Animas and San Juan rivers, federal officials said. Gov. Susana Martinez said Monday that New Mexico will declare a state of emergency, which would release money to assist New Mexico businesses and communities affected by the spill. Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper and tribal officials in the Navajo Nation issued disaster declarations Monday.

**5—Congressional delegation criticizes EPA response on Animas spill, Albo Journal, 8/10/2015**

<http://www.abqjournal.com/626232/politics/congressional-delegation-criticizes-epa-response-on-animas-spill.html>

Several members of New Mexico's congressional delegation wrote Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy Monday criticizing the agency's response to the Gold King Mine spill that has dumped three million gallons of wastewater into the Animas River. Democratic Sens. Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich, along with Rep. Ben Ray Lujan, who represents northern New Mexico, said the EPA needs to improve communication with state and local officials, and the public about the nature of the spill.

**6—EPA officials visit mouth of Gold King Mine north of Silverton, Colo, Farmington Daily Times, 8/10/2015**

[http://www.daily-times.com/four\\_corners-news/ci\\_28618359/epa-officials-visit-mouth-gold-king-mine-north](http://www.daily-times.com/four_corners-news/ci_28618359/epa-officials-visit-mouth-gold-king-mine-north)

Environmental Protection Agency officials met at the mouth of the Gold King Mine Monday afternoon to discuss last week's breach, which discharged 3 million gallons of heavy-metal laden water into a tributary of the Animas River.

EPA on-scene coordinator Hayes Griswold explained to San Juan County, Colo., officials that an EPA team working at the mine on Wednesday underestimated how much pressure was hidden behind the debris that plugged the mine's entrance.

#### **7 — San Juan County residents express concerns over livestock, crops, Daily Times, 8/10/2015**

[http://www.daily-times.com/four\\_corners-news/ci\\_28615875/san-juan-county-residents-express-concerns-over-livestock](http://www.daily-times.com/four_corners-news/ci_28615875/san-juan-county-residents-express-concerns-over-livestock)

San Juan County residents along the Animas River are concerned about their livestock and crops after 3 million gallons of toxic mining waste entered the river over the last week. The New Mexico Environment Department and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency are testing private domestic water supply wells in the Animas River Valley.

#### **8 — Aztec implements water restrictions as everyone waits for test results, Daily Times, 8/10/2015**

[http://www.daily-times.com/four\\_corners-news/ci\\_28613344/aztec-announces-stage-one-water-restrictions-residents](http://www.daily-times.com/four_corners-news/ci_28613344/aztec-announces-stage-one-water-restrictions-residents)

Bloomfield officials are offering to share water — which they pump from the San Juan River at a point that was not exposed to a plume of water polluted with mine waste — if the water exposed to the contamination remains too toxic to treat for an extended period. And the city will impose water restrictions on its residents to help out others in need, if necessary, the city's mayor said Monday.

#### **9 — Navajo Nation Prepares Lawsuit Against EPA After Mine Spill, KNAU, 8/11/2015**

<http://knau.org/post/navajo-nation-prepares-lawsuit-against-epa-after-mine-spill>

The 3 million gallons of mining waste that spilled into Colorado's Animas River is now flowing into the San Juan River on the Navajo Nation. Tribal officials have declared a state of emergency and are preparing to sue the Environmental Protection Agency. Arizona Public Radio's Ryan Heinsius reports.

#### **10 — Officials downstream from Colorado mine spill demand answers, Musko Region, 8/11/2015**

<http://www.muskokaregion.com/news-story/5792550-officials-downstream-from-colorado-mine-spill-demand-answers/>

Local officials in towns downstream from where millions of gallons of mine waste spilled into a southwest Colorado river are demanding answers about possible long-term threats to the water supply. Colorado and New Mexico declared stretches of the Animas and San Juan rivers to be disaster areas as the orange-colored waste stream made its way downstream toward Lake Powell in Utah after the spill Wednesday at the abandoned Gold King mine near Silverton, Colorado.

#### **11 — EPA May Be Liable for Losses in Colorado Mine Spill, Bloomberg, 8/10/2015**

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-08-10/epa-seen-liable-for-losses-after-colorado-mine-spill-fouls-river>

The Environmental Protection Agency and its contractors may have to pay millions of dollars in damages after mistakenly releasing toxic sludge that tainted a Colorado river, preventing its use by ranchers and residents. Mustard-colored water continued to leak Monday from the long-abandoned Gold King Mine in Silverton, Colorado, and into the Animas River, after the EPA said it "unexpectedly triggered" a Aug. 5 blowout. The agency set up a claims process for losses from the 3 million gallons that leaked, three times more than initially estimated.

#### **12 — Environmental Agency Uncorks Its Own Toxic Water Spill at Colorado Mine, NY Times, 8/10/2015**

[http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/11/us/durango-colorado-mine-spill-environmental-protection-agency.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/11/us/durango-colorado-mine-spill-environmental-protection-agency.html?_r=0)

The Animas River is the cultural soul of this patch of southwestern Colorado, a sort of moving Main Street that hosts multiple floating parades a year and is typically bustling with rafters and kayakers. Schoolchildren study the river. Sweethearts marry on its banks. Its former name, given by Spaniards, is el Río de las Ánimas, the River of Souls. But since Wednesday, the Animas has been grievously polluted with toxic water spilled from one of the many abandoned mines that pockmark the region — a spill for which the Environmental Protection Agency has claimed responsibility, saying it accidentally breached a store of chemical-laced water.

**13 Frustrations grow at EPA town hall on Animas River spill, KOAT, 8/11/2015**

<http://www.koat.com/news/nm-gov-to-declare-state-of-emergency-over-animas-river-spill/34639546>

Nearly 3 million gallons of contaminated wastewater from Colorado's Gold King mine has made its way into the Animas River since an EPA mistake last week. The wastewater began spilling last Wednesday when an EPA-supervised cleanup crew accidentally breached a debris dam that was flowing at 550 gallons per minute.

**14 — (Video) Outrage grows over EPA's contamination of Western rivers, CBS, 8/11/2015**

<http://www.cbsnews.com/videos/outrage-grows-over-epas-contamination-of-western-rivers/>

Colorado's governor will visit Durango Tuesday to assess the damage from the Gold King Mine spill. Colorado and New Mexico are under states of emergency along parts of the Animas and San Juan Rivers. The Environmental Protection Agency accidentally triggered the massive sludge spill last week. Mireya Villarreal reports from Farmington, New Mexico.

**15 — Colorado EPA spill: 'We looked at the river and we cried', FOX CT, 8/11/2015**

<http://foxct.com/2015/08/11/colorado-epa-spill-we-looked-at-the-river-and-we-cried/>

From his backyard in, Tom Bartles can see the Animas River, which was stained an unnatural orange. The Environmental Protection Agency accidentally released millions of gallons of pollutants into the water last week, turning the typically blue water to the color of mustard. "Everybody in town knew it was coming. It was hard to wake up in the morning and see an orange river," Bartles told CNN. "Many of the locals in this region are probably going to experience a certain level of mourning."

**16 We misjudged pressure in gold mine before spill, USDA Today, 8/11/15**

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2015/08/11/epa-we-misjudged-pressure-gold-mine-before-spill/31447379/>

As 3 million gallons of heavy-metal laden water made its way into Utah and headed west to Lake Powell, Environmental Protection Agency officials met at the mouth of the Gold King Mine Monday afternoon to discuss last week's breach into a tributary of the Animas River. EPA on-scene coordinator Hayes Griswold explained to San Juan County, Colo., officials that an EPA team working at the mine on Wednesday underestimated how much pressure was hidden behind the debris that plugged the mine's entrance.

# Pollution flowing faster than facts in EPA spill

By Mariano Castillo, CNN

□ Updated 10:20 PM ET, Mon August 10, 2015 | Video

Source: KRQE



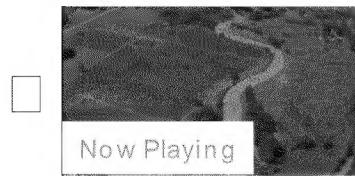
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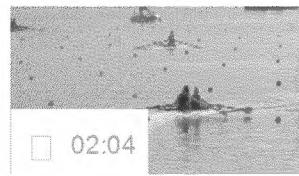


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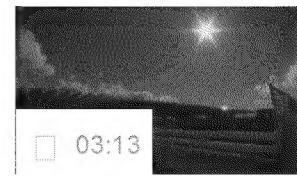
EPA accidentally turns river orange



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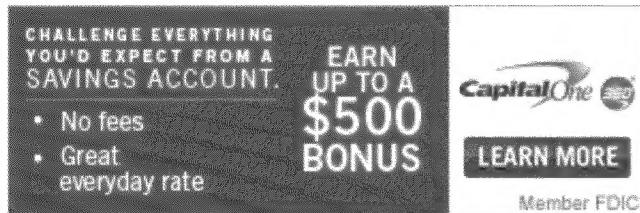
## Story highlights

NEW: "This is a real mess," says one analyst.  
"These levels are shocking."

(CNN)—The mustard hue of the Animas River in Colorado -- the most visible effect of a mistake by the Environmental Protection Agency that dumped millions of gallons of

President of the Navajo Nation announces intent to take legal action against the EPA

Spill is three times larger than originally estimated, U.S. Geological Survey says



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water in peril? Are businesses dependent on the river out of luck?

One question that has been answered is the size of the spill: more than triple than originally estimated. The U.S. Geological Survey reported the size of the spill to be more than 3 million gallons, compared with the initial EPA estimate of 1 million gallons.



Tom Bartles, who lives in Durango, Colorado shared these photos of the Animas River from the viewpoint of his backyard before and after the spill.

that the conditions on the Animas and San Juan rivers between Durango, Colorado, and Farmington, New Mexico, have improved, the EPA said.

According to the EPA, the spill occurred when one of its teams was using heavy equipment to enter the Gold King Mine, a suspended mine near Durango. Instead of

pollutants into the water -- is striking.

Just a glance at a photo of the orange-yellowish slush is enough to know that something seems wrong. Scientists will have to say just how wrong, and possibly dangerous, the contamination is, though five days after the spill answers are few.

Just how polluted is the river? Is drinking

The EPA, which caused the accidental release of the contaminants Wednesday, said it continues to monitor the river.

"Collection, transportation and lab analysis of metals in water is complex and time-consuming," the agency said in a statement.

Cities in New Mexico are also at risk as the pollution flows from the Animas River into the San Juan River.

A flyover with a specialized aircraft showed

entering the mine and beginning the process of pumping and treating the contaminated water inside as planned, the team accidentally caused it to flow into the nearby Animas River.

## 'This is a really devastating spill'

Officials said they believe the spill carried heavy metals -- mainly iron, zinc and copper -- from the mine into a creek that feeds into the Animas.

Wednesday's spill caused a spike in concentrations of total and dissolved metals in the water, the EPA said.

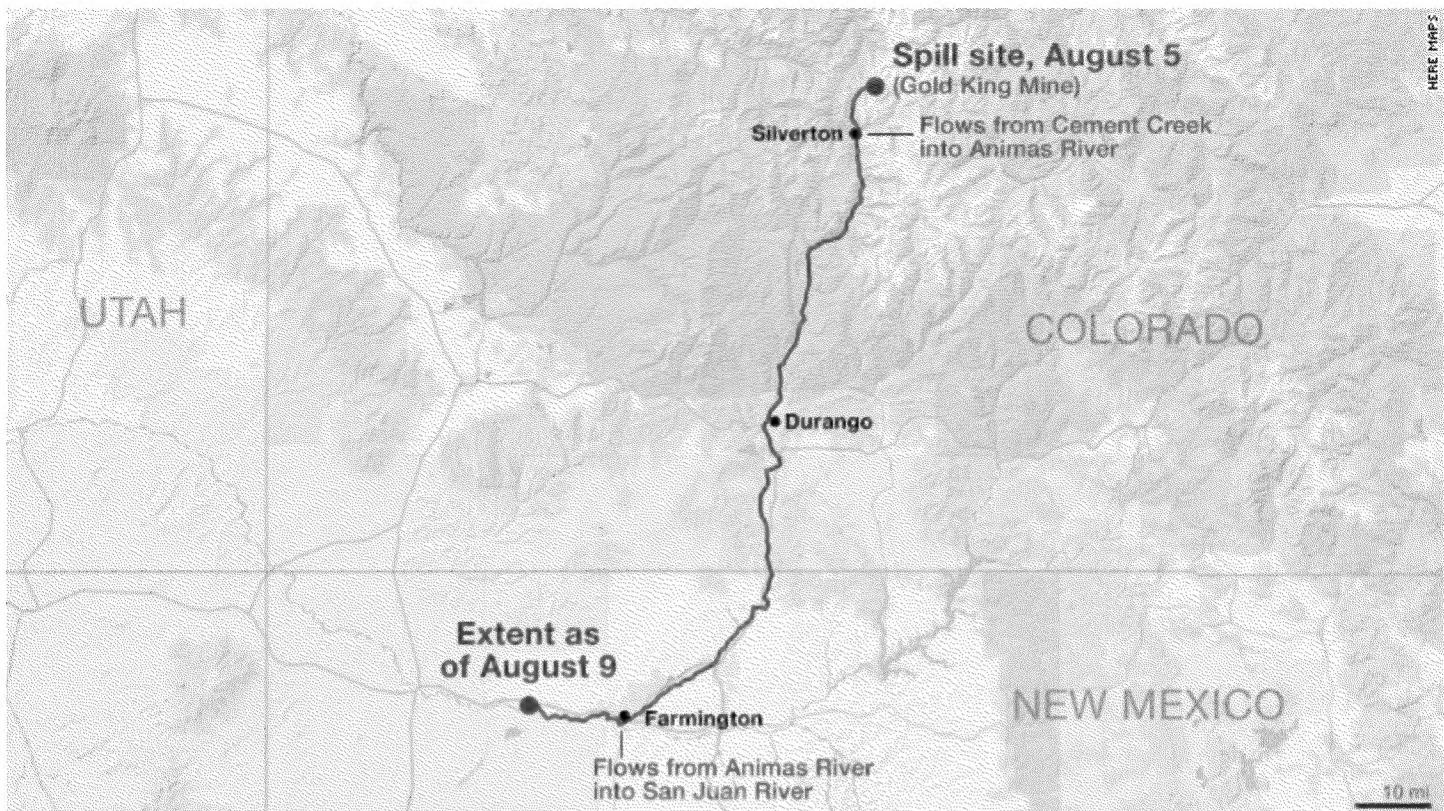
According to sampling done by the EPA on various points along the Animas River Wednesday and Thursday last week, levels of lead, arsenic, beryllium, cadmium and mercury were extremely high compared with acceptable levels set by the agency, which are technically called "maximum contaminant levels" or "action levels for treatment."

One of the samples of mercury was nearly 10 times higher than the EPA acceptable levels. Samples of beryllium and cadmium were 33 times higher, and one of the arsenic levels was more than 800 times higher.

Exposure to high levels of these metals can cause an array of health problems from cancer to kidney disease to developmental problems in children.

"This is a real mess," said Max Costa, chair of the department of environmental medicine at New York University School of Medicine. "These levels are shocking."

According to the EPA, levels "began to return toward pre-event conditions" by Thursday. The agency has collected water samples from nine locations along the San Juan River where there are water intake plants.



River spill map

"This is a really devastating spill," said Kim Stevens, director of the advocacy group Environment Colorado. "We've been hearing from rafting companies and other businesses that rely on the river that if they can't get clients out on the river in the next couple of days, they may have to shut down their doors."

The rivers' ecosystems are also at risk, she said.

"The fish population is especially very sensitive to water contamination, and we really won't be able to see what the impacts are until all of the pollution has run its course. Time will tell what the true impacts are," she said.

The EPA and the New Mexico Environment Department said they will test private domestic wells near the Animas to identify metals of concern from the spill.

Tests on public drinking water systems are conducted separately by the state environment department, the agencies said.

## 'They're not going to get away with this'

Some people are upset at the EPA -- both for the initial spill and its response.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye has announced he intends to take legal action against the federal agency.



11 photos: EPA spill turns Colorado river orange

"They are not going to get away with this," Begaye said in a statement. "The EPA was right in the middle of the disaster and we intend to make sure the Navajo Nation recovers every dollar it spends cleaning up this mess and every dollar it loses as a result of injuries to our precious Navajo natural resources."

In a statement from NMED, state engineer

Tom Blaine said that the EPA took no action to alert residents of New Mexico to the potential danger, and did not notify the state directly.

Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper, meanwhile, declared a state-of-disaster emergency on Monday, a move that allocates \$500,000 from the state's disaster emergency fund to pay for assessments and the response.

"Our priority remains to ensure public safety and minimize environmental impacts," the governor said.

"By declaring a disaster emergency, we are able to better support impacted businesses and communities with state resources. We will work closely with the EPA to continue to measure water quality as it returns to normal, but also to work together to assess other mines throughout the state to make sure this doesn't happen again," he said.

CNN's Elizabeth Cohen, Dana Ford and Pete Janos contributed to this report.

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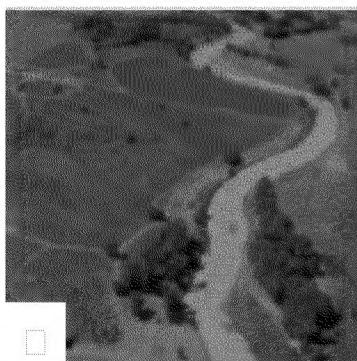


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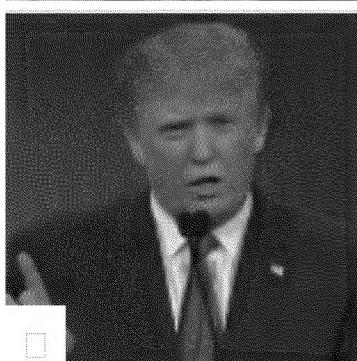
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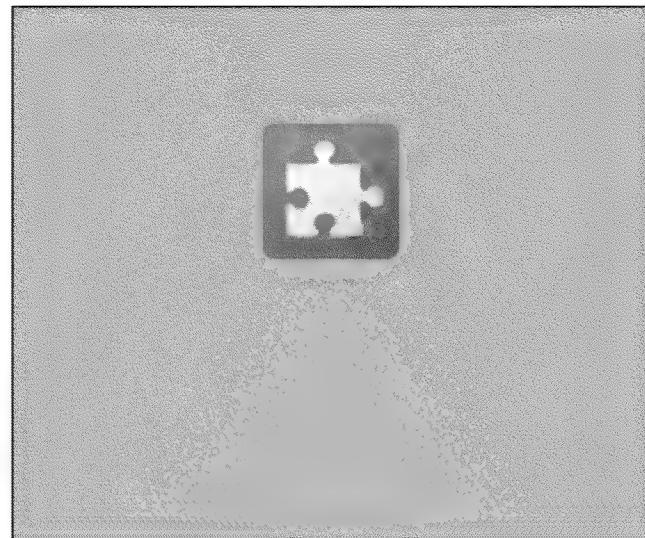
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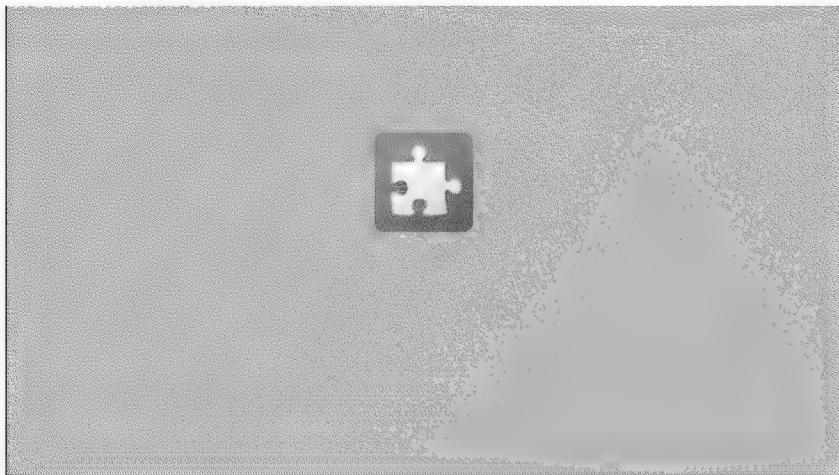
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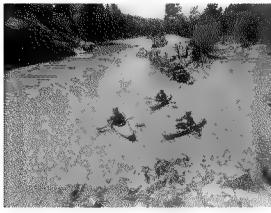
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# Gold mine's toxic plume extends to Utah

Staff, The (Farmington, N.M.) Daily Times 11:35 p.m. EDT August 10, 2015



On the scene at the abandoned gold mine in Silverton, Colo., at the source of the spill that has turned the Animas River orange. Trevor Hughes, USA TODAY



(Photo: Jerry McBride, AP)

FARMINGTON, N.M. — The plume of heavy metals released last week into the Animas River (<http://bit.ly/1NIWjMh>) from the Gold King Mine near Silverton, Colo., reached Utah on Monday.

As of Monday evening, officials said the plume of contamination was southeast of Montezuma Creek, Utah, and was headed for Lake Powell. Environmental Protection Agency officials say the pollutants in the plume include arsenic, lead, copper, aluminum and cadmium, but have not released any detailed information on the spill that started Wednesday morning and has since been contained.

The Gold King Mine's discharge raises the possibility of long-term damage from the toxic metals falling out of suspension as the plume slowly moves along the river.

"Sediment does settle," said Shaun McGrath, administrator of EPA's Region 8. "It settles down to the bottom of the riverbed."

EPA officials announced Monday afternoon that public access to the Animas and San Juan rivers would continue to be closed until at least Aug. 17.

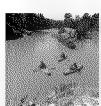
One rural water user association in San Juan County, where New Mexico Gov. Susana Martinez declared a state of emergency Monday, has spent thousands of dollars buying water from Farmington and Aztec because it had to shut down its wells after the toxic mine waste spilled into the Animas last week.

"We don't want to take a chance of contaminating them — and it sure has cost us a lot of money," said Rick Mitchell, Flora Vista Mutual Domestic Water Association general manager.

Mustard-colored water began rushing out of the Gold King Mine in southern Colorado on Wednesday after an EPA team disturbed a dam of loose rock lodged in the mine.

The deluge of polluted water poured into Cement Creek and continued into the Animas River. The plume of pollution, clearly visible from the air and estimated to be more than 80 miles long at one point, reached Farmington, N.M., on Saturday morning.

McGrath said future runoff from storms will kick that toxic sediment back into the water, which means there will need to be long-term monitoring.



USATODAY

EPA: Pollution from mine spill much worse than feared

(<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2015/08/09/navajo-nation-epa-spill/31384515/>)

He added that "the Animas River has historically been polluted by acid mine drainage."

Chapters within the Northern Agency have started the process of issuing emergency declarations after toxic mine waste flowed down the San Juan River onto the Navajo Nation.

The San Juan River travels west through the Navajo Nation, then converges with the Colorado River at Lake Powell in southeastern Utah. For the chapter communities near the San Juan River, it is the main source of water for crops and livestock.

So far, the chapters of Upper Fruitland, Nenahnezad, San Juan and Shiprock have issued either declarations or resolutions calling for a state of emergency within their boundaries.

The "slug" of pollution, which the EPA says contains metals and is about as acidic as black coffee, is headed toward Lake Powell.

Silverton is surrounded by abandoned mines, and the EPA was checking on one of the worst ones, the Gold King, when the breach occurred. Area residents are furious that the federal agency charged with fighting pollution accidentally caused it.

The Animas has largely returned to running clear below Silverton and into Durango, although some of the orange sediment remains in some puddles and along the shore.



USA TODAY

EPA pollutes Colo. river during mine cleanup

(<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2015/08/07/colorado-river-epa-mine-wastewater-spill/31320641/>)

Officials advise residents with wells in the flood plains of the Animas River and the San Juan River downstream of the confluence of the two rivers to have their water tested before using it for cooking, drinking or bathing.

County Executive Officer Kim Carpenter voiced frustration about the delay in getting information about the chemicals in the water. The data, he said, will "give us a big picture of what we are going to deal with and the long-term effects we will have to deal with."

*Contributing: Steve Garrison, Joshua Kellogg and Noel Lyn Smith, The (Farmington, N.M.) Daily Times; and Trevor Hughes, USA TODAY*

# WASTEWATER SPILL THREATENS WATERWAYS

The Environmental Protection Agency has taken responsibility for inadvertently causing a 3 million gallon spill of toxic orange waste-water while trying to clean up an abandoned gold mine in Colorado.

## ● Spread of leak



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## State of Emergency: Colorado Wastewater Leak Far Exceeds First Estimates

by ERIN MCCLAM

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□ Toxic Sludge in Colorado River Threatens Drinking Water Supply 2:27

Gov. John Hickenlooper of Colorado declared a state of emergency on Monday, five days after a spill that sent toxic water seeping from an abandoned gold mine and turned a river orange.

The Environmental Protection Agency said Sunday that 3 million gallons of wastewater had spilled, three times as much as earlier estimates, and that health risks to humans and aquatic life were not yet clear.

Hickenlooper said the disaster declaration would allow him to use \$500,000 from the state's disaster fund to pay for the response. Some of the money will go toward towns and businesses hurt by the spill.

"We will work closely with the EPA to continue to measure water quality as it returns to normal, but also to work together to assess other mines throughout the state to make sure this doesn't happen again," the governor said in a statement.

On Wednesday, an EPA-supervised cleanup crew accidentally breached a debris dam that had formed inside the Gold King Mine, shuttered since 1923, sending a yellow-orange sludge leaking into the Animas River.

□ (<https://www.facebook.com/sharer.php?u=http://www.nbcnews.com/feature/101/video/what-you-should-know-about-the-toxic-colorado-mine-spill-501581379884&t=What You Should Know About the Toxic Colorado Mine Spill>)  
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#### □ What You Should Know About the Toxic Colorado Mine Spill 1:08

Water collected downstream showed higher than normal levels of arsenic, lead and other metals. In Durango, Colorado, the mayor assured people the water was safe to drink because the city shut off its intake valve from the Animas.

Still, "the river for us is an integral part of our community," state Sen. Ellen Roberts, who represents Durango, told MSNBC on Monday. "It's where people get married. People do their own private ceremonies along there. It's our daily life."

The discolored water reached New Mexico and was headed for Utah. Authorities there were planning to shut two wells that serve the town of Montezuma Creek. A tank of residential water in Hatch, New Mexico, was filled with water shipped from Arizona.

□ (<https://www.facebook.com/sharer.php?u=http://www.nbcnews.com/video/contaminated-water-fears-bring-new-mexico-residents-to-water-testing-stations-501641795808&t=Contaminated Water Fears Bring New Mexico Residents to Water Testing Stations>)

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# State of emergency in NM

Olivier Uyttebrouck And Ollie Reed / Journal Staff Writers



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Five New Mexico water systems, including those of Aztec and Farmington, continued to rely on reserve storage Monday, five days after a 3 million-gallon spill dumped toxic heavy metals into the Animas and San Juan rivers, federal officials said.



Gov. Susana Martinez said Monday that New Mexico will declare a state of emergency, which would release money to assist New Mexico businesses and communities affected by the spill. Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper and tribal officials in the Navajo Nation issued disaster declarations Monday.

Meanwhile, Bloomfield activated an emergency waterline to send water to Aztec. Bloomfield is not affected by the Animas spill but is shutting down the watering of parks to conserve the supply it is now sharing with its neighbors.

The five New Mexico systems shut down their river water intake systems last week based on testing and analysis at nine locations on the San Juan and Animas rivers, said Ron Curry, District 6 administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

An attempt to stop a leak at an abandoned mine tunnel in Colorado last week caused 3 million gallons to spill into the Animas and San Juan rivers.

Testing found the mustard-yellow sludge contained nearly two dozen heavy metals, such as arsenic and lead.

The spill has forced five New Mexico water systems to halt use of river water and rely on reserve storage.

Officials are unlikely to make a decision before Monday, Aug. 17, to resume use of river water for public or agricultural uses.

New Mexico, Colorado and Navajo Nation officials all have announced plans to seek a disaster declaration.

State officials have criticized EPA for slow notice of the leak, and members of New Mexico's congressional delegation told EPA officials they need to improve communication with state and local officials, as well as the public.

Navajo Nation officials have said the tribe is frustrated with EPA's response and plan to take legal action.

Curry and other EPA officials had no estimate on how many people are affected by the closures when they spoke with reporters in a telephone conference call Monday.

"We do not anticipate any reopening decision until at least (Monday) Aug. 17," said Shaun McGrath, administrator for EPA Region 8 in Denver.

The decision to resume use of river water for drinking, agricultural and recreational uses will be based on testing and analysis of water samples across the length of the spill, McGrath said.

"The timing of these decisions could vary among local, state and tribal governments based on local conditions and by uses," he said.

The five systems are those of Aztec and Farmington, the Lower Valley Water Users Association in Kirtland, the Morning Star Water Supply System and the North Star Water Users Association near Aztec.

Farmers in the Animas and San Juan river valleys said they have no water to irrigate their crops.

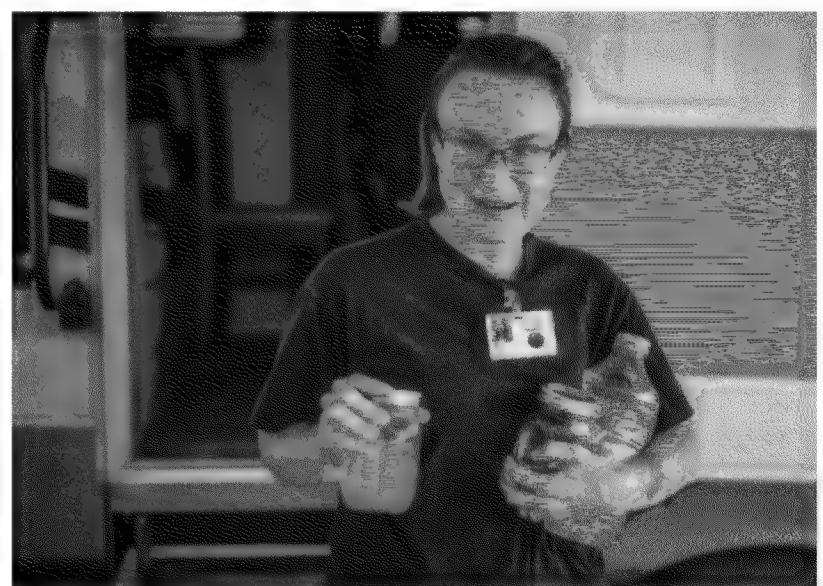
D'rese Sutherland, who with her husband owns Sutherland Farm on the Animas River near Aztec, said they halted irrigation Friday of their 80 acres of chile, pumpkins and other vegetables.

"We definitely won't be putting water on our crops until we get word that we're good to go," she said. "We will probably rely on third-party testing."

The farm received some rain Friday, "so we are probably good for about a week," she said.

The Animas flowed clear on Monday, she said, with only a tinge of the mustard-yellow color visible over the weekend.

The Sutherlands continued to rely on drinking water from the North Star Water Users System, which is among the five systems that have stopped drawing water from the river.



Ali Furrall with the New Mexico Environment Department carries water samples taken from sites within 500 feet of the Animas River near Farmington. (Roberto E. Rosales/Journal)

North Star has alerted its users that it has water storage sufficient for 60 to 75 days, she said.

The plume of heavy metals released Wednesday into the Animas River from the Gold King Mine near Silverton, Colo., turned the Animas into a thick yellow soup late last week.

The plume reached the San Juan County cities of Aztec, Farmington and Kirtland over the weekend, and arrived in Utah early Monday, officials said. Albuquerque officials have said the spill is not expected to affect the city's water supply.

The Animas River flows into the San Juan River near Farmington. The San Juan flows west through Shiprock, then northwest into Utah, where it joins the Colorado River just north of Lake Powell, a huge reservoir in southern Utah and northern Arizona.

Contaminated water continued to escape from the King Mine near Silverton on Monday but was treated in four collection ponds before its release, EPA spokesman David Gray said.

### Farmington meeting

Jan Schembara and her son, Micah Groth, were among more than 200 people attending a public meeting Monday at the Farmington Civic Center. The purpose of the meeting, hosted by San Juan County and attended by representatives of both the state Environment Department and the EPA, was to update people on the spill and its consequences.

Schembara and Groth live in Farmington and have water available now from the city's water reserves. What they want to know is how long they can depend on having a good water supply.

"We have a garden in our yard," Schembara said. "Do we need to stop watering right away, because we are going to have to start rationing? And I am also concerned about the long-term effect on our environment. That river meanders a long way."

Groth, a landscaper, said he is worried about the effect of the spill on the local economy, particularly the agricultural business.

Kim Carpenter, San Juan County manager, said 60,000 people live within a mile on either side of the Animas and San Juan rivers, and there are 60,000 head of livestock and 1,600 wells in that area.

Environment Department employee Nancy McDuffie said that of 250 samples tested Monday, nothing of concern had been detected. She said the department will send teams to the homes of people who have wells within 500 feet of the rivers to do more exhaustive testing of the water in those wells.

Ryan Flynn, secretary of the New Mexico Environment Department, attended Monday's meeting. He warned people not to use well water until they have been told it was OK to do so.

Flynn told the Journal that Monday's meeting was the second public meeting held in Farmington. He said the first, attended by 350 people, lasted four or more hours and had been tough but necessary.

"You have to be upfront and honest," Flynn said. "People are angry and they are scared. They need to express their



Residents who live near the Animas River gather Monday at the Farmington Civic Center to hear the latest water test results. (Roberto E. Rosales/Journal)

concerns. Sometimes, it is not even questions. It's just people wanting to get things off their chests."

Aztec City Manager Josh Ray announced water restrictions Monday intended to conserve the city's reserve water supply.

Aztec has relied since Friday on three reservoirs that hold 73 million gallons of water to provide the city's needs of 1.4 million gallons a day, he said.

The city's reserves will last about 50 days at the current rate of use, he said. The city has been relying on its reserve supply for five days.

The Stage 1 water restrictions Ray implemented Monday afternoon instruct city water customers not to water yards, gardens, trees or shrubs, except during certain times and days.



The Animas River was starting to clear up near Farmington on Monday. (Roberto E. Rosales/Journal)

Farmington, which turned off its pumps on the Animas River on Thursday morning, has about 90 days of stored water reserves, Public Works Director David Sypher said.

Farmington is not considering water restrictions for now, he said.

#### EPA critics

Martinez and Flynn have been blistering in their criticism of the EPA, particularly for not notifying state officials for 24 hours after the spill.

Members of New Mexico's congressional delegation joined the criticism Monday, sending a letter to the EPA asking that it develop a comprehensive plan for addressing those communities, farms and ranches that are without water and urging better communication with state officials.

The letter says the lack of water is already taking a toll on residents and their livelihoods.

The New Mexico Environment Department is offering free water testing for people affected by the spill from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the San Juan County Sheriff's Office substation in Lee Acres, 21 County Road 5500 in Farmington.

A spokeswoman for the department said those hours may be extended if the demand for water testing continues.

One scientist involved in the testing said a line of people were waiting at 8 a.m. Monday to get their water tested.

*The Associated Press contributed to this report.*

# Congressional delegation criticizes EPA response on Animas spill

Michael Coleman / Journal Washington Bureau

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Several members of New Mexico's congressional delegation wrote Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy Monday criticizing the agency's response to the Gold King Mine spill that has dumped three million gallons of wastewater into the Animas River.

Democratic Sens. Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich, along with Rep. Ben Ray Lujan, who represents northern New Mexico, said the EPA needs to improve communication with state and local officials, and the public about the nature of the spill.

"In the immediate wake of the spill and in the days that followed, there was a troubling lack of communication from EPA to federal, state, and local officials," the Democratic lawmakers wrote. "Our offices, as well as leaders in the state and our constituents, had to learn of the spill and critical details from news reports before receiving any information from EPA. Many of our constituents continue to feel that EPA is not providing timely information, and we encourage you to better communicate with impacted communities."

The EPA now says 3 million gallons of wastewater spilled Wednesday and Thursday, instead of 1 million, according to the Associated Press. The revision came after the EPA used a stream gauge from the U.S. Geological Survey. An EPA-supervised crew, who was trying to enter the mine to pump out and treat the water, caused the spill. The agency has not said how long cleanup efforts will take.

But an EPA official said Sunday that she doesn't believe wildlife will suffer significant health impacts from the wastewater from an abandoned mine in southwestern Colorado.

The members of Congress also urged the EPA to appoint one person to oversee the public response to the spill in an area that spans three regions.

"One person overseeing EPA's efforts will help ensure proper communication and collaboration between the regions and between EPA and the public," the lawmakers' letter said.

Moreover, they said there doesn't appear to be a single, comprehensive plan to address the crisis.

"Since learning of the spill, our offices have been in constant communications with EPA, however, we have yet to be presented with a comprehensive plan from the agency to provide water to those whose wells have been affected, farmers whose crops are not being irrigated, ranchers whose livestock are without water, and people for drinking, cooking, and showering," the letter said. "Already, a lack of water is taking a toll on these individuals and their livelihoods."

The full text of the letter is below.

Dear Administrator McCarthy:

It is with great concern that we write to you in the recent aftermath of the release of three million gallons of wastewater from the Gold King Mine in southern Colorado. The spill has contaminated the Animas River, which flows into northern New Mexico and the Navajo Nation. We know that the EPA is working to address the impact of the spill;

however we have many concerns and unanswered questions about this critical effort following a recent community meeting in Farmington, New Mexico.

In an effort to improve communication and coordination, we believe that EPA should establish a single point person to oversee the agency's efforts. With the spill impacting three EPA regions, it is critical that all regions are working collaboratively. We are concerned that data that has been released by Region 8 was slow to be shared with the State of New Mexico. One person overseeing EPA's efforts will help ensure proper communication and collaboration between the regions and between EPA and the public.

Another step we believe should be taken immediately is the establishment of a toll free number for New Mexico residents to call for information about the spill and steps they can take to protect their health and safety. While a phone number has been set up in Colorado, a number for New Mexico has not been established. Please act swiftly to address this.

We request a detailed plan from EPA to address this lack of water in San Juan County and the Navajo Nation. In addition, EPA must provide impacted States with all of the resources that it has at its disposal. The agency should begin by fulfilling the current requests submitted by all of the State partners, including a mobile lab for water quality tests.

As our communities deal with the impacts of the Gold King Mine spill, it is important to know if EPA is conducting any similar work on other mines in region, and if so, are those efforts continuing or have they been halted? We would like to know if EPA had a mitigation plan in place prior to the spill in an effort to prepare for any adverse outcomes during work on the Gold King Mine. If work is occurring on other mines, are there mitigation plans in place for those? In addition, it is important that we do not exacerbate this situation right now and we would like assurances that EPA has or is developing contingency plans for any additional mine failures, heavy rain events or any other scenario that could worsen the situation.

While the immediate efforts are focused on ensuring the health and safety of all those affected by this serious spill, in the coming days and weeks there must be a serious discussion about the financial impact felt by the State of New Mexico, the Navajo Nation, local governments, and individuals. We believe there is a responsibility to make whole all those who have been harmed economically in a timely fashion.

Due to the serious nature of the situation in northern New Mexico, we look forward to a swift response to these concerns, and again encourage EPA to better communicate with the impacted communities.

Sincerely,

Tom Udall

United States Senator

Martin Heinrich

United States Senator

Ben Ray Luján

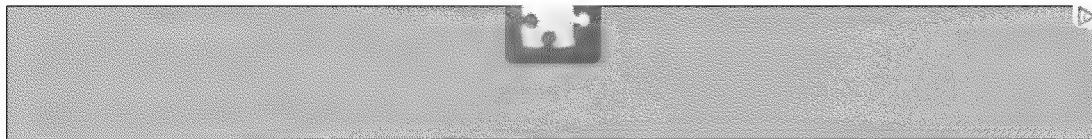
Member of Congress

CC:

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Regional Administrator Shawn McGrath, Region 8

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EPA on-scene coordinator explains what caused last week's rupture

By Steve Garrison The Daily Times

UPDATED: 08/10/2015 09:26:25 PM MDT

0 COMMENTS



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The confluence of Cement Creek, at right, and the Animas River, left, as seen on Monday in Silverton, Colo. This is where the plume of contaminated water from the Gold King Mine entered the Animas River. (Jon Austria — The Daily Times)

**GOLD KING MINE, COLO. — Environmental Protection**

Agency officials met at the mouth of the Gold King Mine

Monday afternoon to discuss last week's breach, which discharged 3 million gallons of heavy-metal laden water into a tributary of the Animas River.

EPA on-scene coordinator Hayes Griswold explained to San Juan County, Colo., officials that an EPA team working at the mine on Wednesday underestimated how much pressure was hidden behind the debris that plugged the mine's entrance.

He said the team was not attempting to dislodge the plug, but was instead attempting to stick a pipe into the top of the mine.

The pipe would allow the team to safely pump liquid out of the mine for treatment, Griswold said.

"We were very careful," he said, adding that he has 28 years of mining experience.

However, the team removed too much material from the mine's roof, which caused the rupture, Griswold said.

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As reported, mustard colored water polluted with toxic waste poured from the mine and emptied into nearby Cement Creek, which drains into the Animas River.

The polluted waters were carried along the Animas River through Durango and then flowed into the San Juan River at the confluence of the rivers in Farmington on Saturday morning.

Griswold was joined at the Gold King Mine Monday by Martin Hestmark, an assistant regional administrator for EPA Region 8.

Hestmark warned Griswold about allowing another such incident to occur and said they would need to discuss ways to contain the many mines that pockmark the mountains surrounding Silverton.

"One of the things the community will not tolerate is this happening again," Hestmark said.

Griswold said Monday that the mine was discharging anywhere between 200 to 700 gallons per minute of polluted water.

The fluctuation in discharge was caused by cave-ins within the mine, which may temporarily slow the flow rate, Griswold said.

Contaminated water floods Animas River



The water flowed down the mountain pooling in one of several man-made ponds a few thousand feet below the mine's mouth where contractors treated it with lime, coagulants and caustic soda.

Griswold said he believed there were other mines in the area that posed a similar threat of rupturing.

*Steve Garrison covers crime and courts for The Daily Times. He can be reached at 505-564-4644 and [stgarrison@daily-times.com](mailto:stgarrison@daily-times.com). Follow him on Twitter @SteveGarrisonDT (<http://www.twitter.com/SteveGarrisonDT>) on Twitter.*

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## San Juan County residents express concerns over livestock, crops

New Mexico Environment Department, EPA offer free water testing

By Joshua Kellogg *The Daily Times*

UPDATED: 08/10/2015 08:24:13 PM MDT

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New Mexico Environment Department District Manager Bob Italiano places bottles of water for testing on a table as residents get their water tested Monday at the San Juan County Sheriff's Office Lee Acres substation in Farmington. (Alexa Rogals — The Daily Times)

FARMINGTON — San Juan County residents along the Animas River are concerned about their livestock and crops after 3 million gallons of toxic mining waste entered the river over the last week.

The New Mexico Environment Department and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency are testing private domestic water supply wells in the Animas River Valley. The agencies will provide free water testing from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily through Friday at the San Juan County Sheriff's Office substation in Lee Acres, 21 County Road 5500 in Farmington.

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About 250 residents on Monday visited the water testing site, officials said.

Debbie Taylor lives north of Aztec in a subdivision that operates off a well near the river. She said she has been using bottled and filtered water at home and traveling to her parents' house to bathe.

"It's a big inconvenience," Taylor said. "It's not just today, it's tomorrow, next week and next month. It's going to be something that affects us for months to come."

Officials have advised residents with wells in the floodplains of the Animas and San Juan rivers downstream of the confluence to have their water tested before using it for cooking, drinking or bathing. Water testing for residents in the Animas River Valley will be prioritized, said state Environment Department spokeswoman Allison Scott Majure. A list of wells within 1.5 miles of the Animas River can be found at [nmedriverwatersafety.org](http://www.nmedriverwatersafety.org) (<http://www.nmedriverwatersafety.org>).

"If your wellhead is level with the river, and (you) live in the Animas floodplain, it's a possibility you can be drawing settled sediments from this spill into your well," Majure said.

Majure said staff from the department will also visit homes along the Animas River to ask landowners to test their wells.

Two kinds of water testing are being offered. Field instrument testing is being used to determine the pH of the water and whether sediments and metals are present.

To get their water tested, residents need to bring 16 to 32 ounces of water in a clean container.

If a sample is positive, a state Environment Department or EPA employee will travel to the resident's well to collect a sterile sample for full laboratory analysis. That could take up to four days to process. In the event of a positive result, agencies will follow up with residents in six to eight weeks to see if there are residual effects of the sediment, Majure said.

Mike Hemmingson said on Monday that his family and livestock depend on the well water at his home along Ruins Road north of Aztec.

"It's a pain," Hemmingson said of not being able to use the well water. "It's not a good deal. I'm not set up to haul water."

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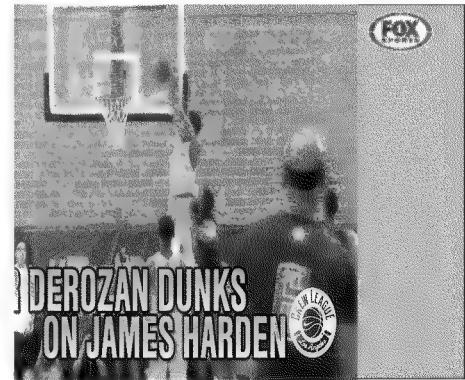
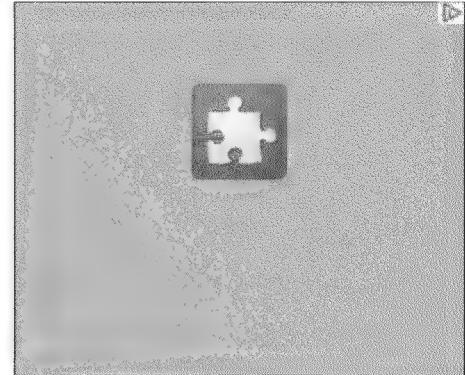
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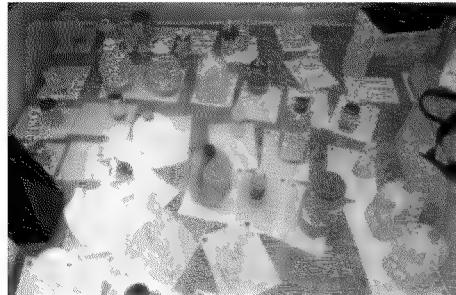
Major Mortgage - Tor Hayward

He said he'll have to purchase equipment to haul water for his four horses and seven cows.

Tweeti Blancett of Blancett Ranches said she has closed two of her spillgates to stop the Animas River from entering her property, which is about a mile south of the New Mexico-Colorado border.

"Once that contamination goes into the ground, it's much harder to clean up," Blancett said.

She also expressed concern for the small farms along the Animas River. Right now, she said, is a critical time for their crops.

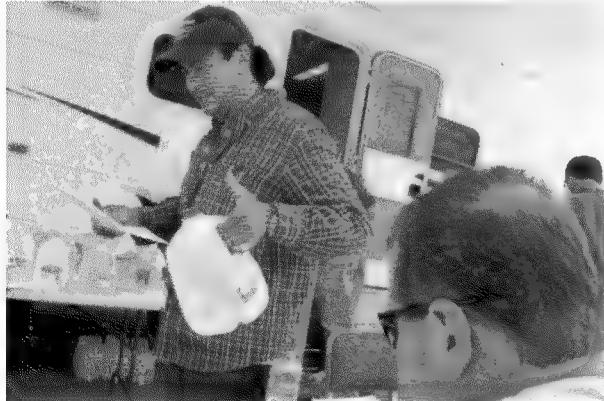


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Bottles of water sit on the floor Monday during water testing at the San Juan County Sheriff's Office Lee Acres substation in Farmington. (Alexa Rogals — The Daily Times)

responders to distribute.

Red Cross staff also distributed a palette of water to residents at Monday evening's public hearing at the Farmington Civic Center. Leftover water was dropped off with Farmington's Catholic Charities for distribution.



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Alex Coca, an environmental scientist with the New Mexico Environment Department, checks over paperwork as residents get their water tested Monday at the San Juan County Sheriff's Office Lee Acres substation in Farmington. (Alexa Rogals — The Daily Times)

## MORE INFO

Officials have set up potable water stations in San Juan County for residents and RV and livestock owners.

- Bloomfield Fire Station, 911 N. First St. Open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. through Friday.
- Farmington Fire Station No. 6, 3101 W. Main St. Open from 6 to 7 p.m. through Friday.

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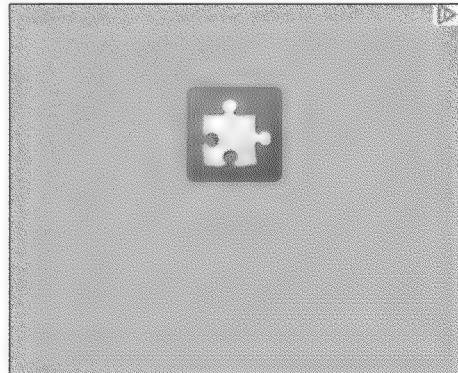
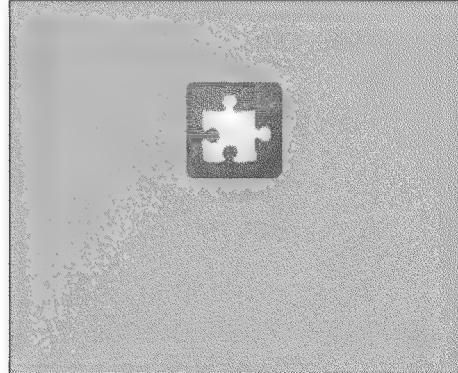
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- Sycamore Park Community Center, 1051 Sycamore St., Farmington. Open from 6 to 7 p.m. through Friday.
- Center Point Fire Station No. 1, 16 County Road 2755. Open 6 to 7 p.m. through Friday.
- Flora Vista Fire Station No. 1, 2 County Road 3275. Open 6 to 7 p.m. through Friday.
- Valley Fire Station No. 4, 4 County Road 6200. Open 6 to 7 p.m. through Friday.

Owners of RVs and livestock can fill their tanks at 201 W. Chaco St. in Aztec, next to City Hall and the Aztec Police Department. Residents need to bring their own containers and are asked to keep tanks to 100 gallons or less.

*Joshua Kellogg covers education for The Daily Times. He can be reached at 505-564-4627 and [jkellogg@daily-times.com](mailto:jkellogg@daily-times.com) (mailto:jkellogg@daily-times.com). Follow him [@jkelloggdt](http://www.twitter.com/jkelloggdt) (http://www.twitter.com/jkelloggdt) on Twitter.*

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## Aztec implements water restrictions as everyone waits for test results

After release of contaminated water, officials consider ways to keep taps running

*By Dan Schwartz The Daily Times*

UPDATED: 08/10/2015 10:26:21 PM MDT



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Beth, left, and Gene Stidham of Tranquility, Calif., prepare a table with cases of water for residents on Monday outside the Farmington Civic Center before a public meeting to update residents about contamination that flowed through the Animas River. (Alexa Rogals — The Daily Times)

FARMINGTON — Bloomfield officials are offering to share water — which they pump from the San Juan River at a point that was not exposed to a plume of water polluted with mine waste — if the water exposed to the contamination remains too toxic to treat for an extended period. And the city will impose water restrictions on its residents to help out others in need, if necessary, the city's mayor said Monday.

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"That's just to be safe," Bloomfield Mayor Scott Eckstein said.

On Wednesday, an Environmental Protection Agency team accidentally ruptured a containment plug at the Gold King Mine above Silverton, Colo. An estimated 3 million gallons of water polluted with heavy metals rushed into Cement Creek and then into the Animas River. It flowed into the San Juan River in Farmington where the rivers come together on Saturday and entered Utah on Monday.

Aztec and Farmington closed their pumps along the Animas River following the spill, and five rural water user associations also shut down their operations to protect their water supplies.

Aztec has 73 million gallons of water in three reservoirs, which allows the city about 50 days of water without pumping from the Animas River before it runs dry, Aztec City Manager Josh Ray said. But the city's already used five days, he said. On Monday, the city imposed its first level of water restrictions.

Farmington has about 90 days of water in its single reservoir without pumping from the Animas River, Public Works Director David Sypher said.

Many rural water user associations have fewer days of reserves.

While the EPA hasn't released many details on the concentrations of toxic metals spilled into the Animas River, preliminary data released on Sunday found arsenic levels peaked at 300 times the normal level and lead peaked at 3,500 times the normal level in the Durango area. EPA officials said those levels dropped quickly after the plume of contamination passed.

Extended exposure to those metals in high concentrations poses a significant health threat to humans and animals. But the concentrations reported Sunday in the Durango area remain in an area for only a short while, said Deborah McKean, EPA Region 8 toxicology and human health and risk assessment chief.

EPA Region 8 Administrator Shaun McGrath declined to "speculate" on what levels of pollution will remain from heavy-metal laden sediment that fell out of the slow-moving plume as it passed downstream. "We are seeing a trajectory toward pre-event conditions," he said.

He said the EPA will continue to sample and model the pollution levels. "We are absolutely committed to the longer term," McGrath said.



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Tom Blaine, New Mexico State engineer, speaks to residents and participants on Monday during a public meeting at the Farmington Civic Center called to update

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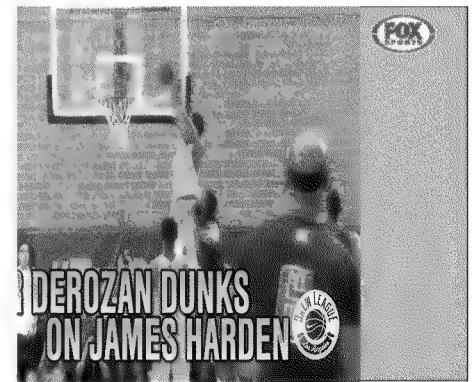
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residents on contamination that flowed through the Animas River. (Alexa Rogals — The Daily Times)

The results of testing along the Animas River in San Juan County should be ready on Wednesday, said Mark Hayes, an EPA on-scene coordinator for Region 6, in an interview Tuesday after a public meeting at the Farmington Civic Center.

"They should be definitive results," he said.

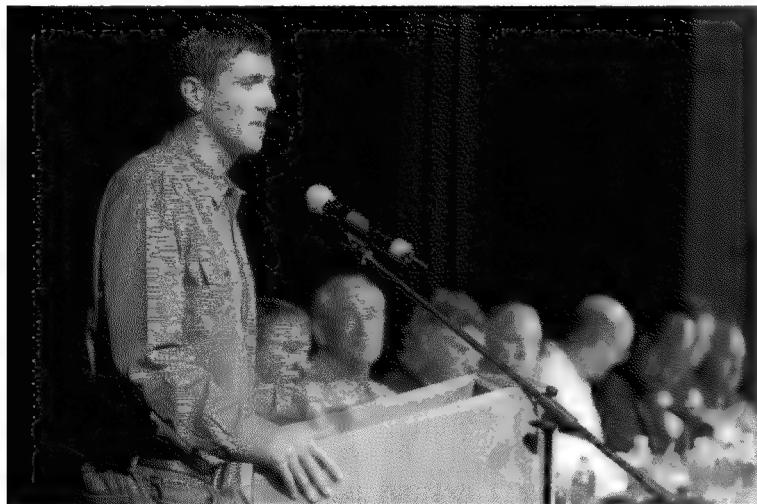
County Executive Officer Kim Carpenter said in the meeting that he's flown over the Animas River three times — most recently on Monday — and he has not seen any abnormal wildlife activity. He also said the mustard color in the water is fading.

In the meeting, state officials encouraged residents not to water fields or allow livestock to drink the water. And if crops or cattle die from the pollution, New Mexico Department of Agriculture Secretary Jeff Witte said his department will try to get their owners reimbursed.

"Document it," he said. "Document it."

The preliminary heavy-metal levels reported on Sunday would be too high for Aztec's water treatment plants to clean, Ray said. If the pollution prevented the city from pumping water out of the Animas River for 120 days or longer, it would rely on Bloomfield for "a lot" of water, he said. Even then, he said, Aztec would still pay to truck in water.

A line connects Aztec's and Bloomfield's water sources so in emergencies the communities can exchange water. Ray expects the line to be operational — it currently has a dead spot — by Tuesday morning. Then, he said, Aztec may begin pulling water from Bloomfield.



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Ryan Flynn, New Mexico Environment Department secretary, speaks about the water testing sites on Monday during a public meeting at the Farmington Civic Center called to update residents on contamination that flowed through the Animas River. (Alexa Rogals — The Daily Times)

Farmington is directly connected to the San Juan River by a line, and it has water rights to the river, Sypher said. The system would need "quick upgrades" before it would be operational, but that is Farmington's current contingency plan if testing shows Animas River water remains too toxic to treat for an extended period of time, he said.

He said many rumors about the levels of toxic metals in the Animas River exist, but until the city has test results from the river that conclusively say what they are, drafting a more specific action plan is difficult.

The city's water treatment plant can clean some levels of heavy metals but only to an extent, he said.

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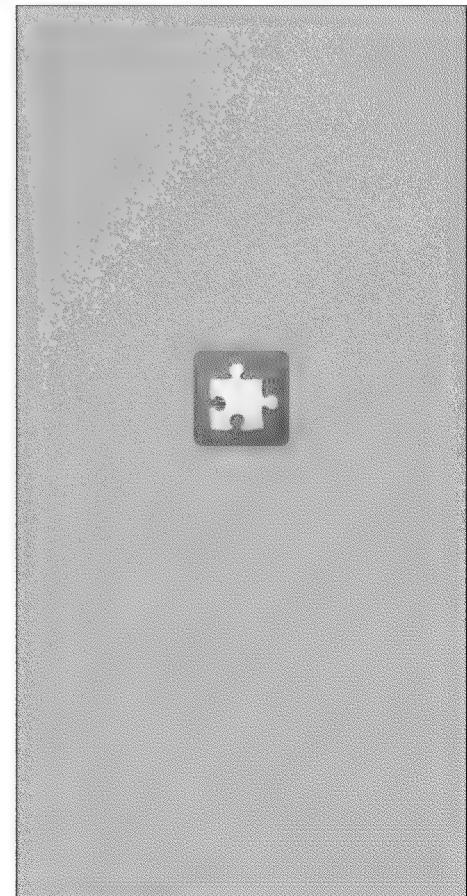
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Sypher said Farmington is not currently considering water restrictions, but its officials ask that residents conserve water voluntarily.

"Of course this mining incident is of concern for us, but at this point, we don't have the information we need to say that this is going to last beyond our capacity," he said. He added, "We just need to be patient for a couple more days until we get our test results."

Many of the managers of rural water user associations in San Juan County say they don't have the equipment to remove heavy metals from drinking water pumped out of the Animas River. And five of the associations stopped pumping water because of the pollution.

Rick Mitchell manages the Flora Vista Mutual Domestic Water Association, which supplies almost 5,000 residents with water. It pumps its water from wells near the Animas River. State and federal officials have asked people with wells in the rivers' floodplains to have their water tested. The association's storage tank holds 300,000 gallons of water, which would last about a day, he said.

Mitchell ordered the association to stop pumping from its wells Thursday morning before the plume of contamination arrived and has spent about \$7,000 since then buying water from Aztec and Farmington.

"It sure has cost us a lot of money," he said.

He said he will likely impose water restrictions on Tuesday.

Many other water user associations are also facing short reserves and considering conservation methods. They also may soon begin buying water from other sources.

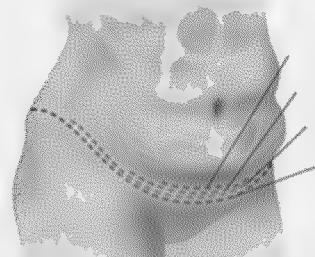
But all the managers of municipal and rural water reserves along sections of rivers that were exposed to the pollution say they are waiting on test results to determine when they can turn their pumps back on.

"People are scared," said Lloyd Ayliffe, who manages the Blanco Water Users Association. The association pumps water from the San Juan River from a spot above its confluence with the Animas River that was not exposed to the plume of pollution.

"We're getting a lot of calls," he said, "and they just don't know what's going on."

*Dan Schwartz covers government for The Daily Times. He can be reached at 505-564-4606 and [dschwartz@daily-times.com](mailto:dschwartz@daily-times.com) (mailto:dschwartz@daily-times.com). Follow him [@dtdschwartz](http://www.twitter.com/dtdschwartz) (<http://www.twitter.com/dtdschwartz>) on Twitter.*

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KNAU And Arizona News

5:00 AM TUE AUGUST 11, 2015

## Navajo Nation Prepares Lawsuit Against EPA After Mine Spill

By [RYAN HEINSIUS \(/PEOP/RYAN-HEINSIUS\)](#)

The 3 million gallons of mining waste that spilled into Colorado's Animas River is now flowing into the San Juan River on the Navajo Nation. Tribal officials have declared a state of emergency and are preparing to sue the Environmental Protection Agency. Arizona Public Radio's Ryan Heinsius reports.



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The confluence of the Animas and San Juan rivers near Farmington, N.M. Three million gallons of mine waste spilled into the Animas last week from the Gold King Mine near Silverton, Colo. The toxic plume is now flowing into the San Juan on the Navajo Nation causing several communities to shut down water access from the river.

*Credit: Donovan Quintero/Navajo Times*



Several tribal communities along the San Juan have shut off their taps from the river until further notice from the EPA. The emergency declaration signed Saturday allows further tribal funds to support relief efforts on the Navajo Nation.

The spill was caused by EPA investigators while examining the Gold King Mine near Silverton, Colorado. Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez says he wants full accountability from the federal government.

"We want to hold whoever was responsible for this spill and hold them accountable the full extent of the law. This is going to be a long-term cleanup. We can't just let this go," says Vice President Nez.

He says farmers dependent on the San Juan River for irrigation could be facing the loss of entire crops. Without access to water, area livestock could also be in jeopardy. He, along with President Russell Begaye and other tribal officials are demanding more information from the EPA regarding the level of danger posed by the toxic plume.

The EPA says tests of the contaminated water are ongoing.

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## Officials downstream from Colorado mine spill demand answers

| 58 minutes ago

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. - Local officials in towns downstream from where millions of gallons of mine waste spilled into a southwest Colorado river are demanding answers about possible long-term threats to the water supply.

Colorado and New Mexico declared stretches of the Animas and San Juan rivers to be disaster areas as the orange-colored waste stream made its way downstream toward Lake Powell in Utah after the spill Wednesday at the abandoned Gold King mine near Silverton, Colorado.

The 3 million gallons of mine waste included high concentrations of arsenic, lead and other heavy metals. Workers with the EPA accidentally unleashed the spill as they inspected the abandoned mine site.

EPA officials said Monday that there was no leading edge of contamination visible in downstream sections of the San Juan River or Lake Powell. But that has done little to ease concerns or quell the anger caused by the spill.

The Navajo Nation, which covers parts of New Mexico, Utah and Arizona, declared an emergency as it shut down water intake systems and stopped diverting water from the San Juan River.

Members of the tribal council were frustrated during a special meeting Monday and echoed the sentiment of New Mexico and Utah officials that the federal government needs to be held accountable.

Utah Attorney General Sean Reyes discussed the legal implications with his New Mexico counterpart, Hector Balderas, and planned to hold a similar call with Colorado Attorney General Cynthia Coffman, Reyes' office said Monday.

"We hope to work with our sister states to ensure our citizens are protected and whatever remediation is necessary occurs as quickly as possible," Reyes said in a statement. "We will continue to evaluate the legal issues as we receive data and monitor the effects on our communities."

Meanwhile, a spokesman for Utah Gov. Gary Herbert said the governor is disappointed in the EPA's initial handling of the spill but the state has no plans for legal action.

The EPA has said the contaminants were moving too fast to be an immediate health threat. Experts and federal environmental officials say they expect the river system to dilute the heavy metals before they pose a longer-term threat.

The EPA said stretches of the rivers would be closed for drinking water, recreation and other uses at least through Aug. 17.

Dissolved iron in the waste turned the long plume an alarming orange-yellow — a look familiar to old-time miners who call it "yellow boy" — so "the water appears worse esthetically than it actually is, in terms of health," said Ron Cohen, a civil and environmental engineering professor at the Colorado School of Mines.

Tests show some of the metals have settled to the bottom and would dissolve only if conditions became acidic, which isn't likely, Cohen said.

The best course for the EPA would be to leave the metals where they settle, he said, noting that next spring's mountain snowmelt would help dilute the contaminants further and flush them downstream.

No die-off of wildlife along the river has yet been detected. Federal officials say all but one of a test batch of fingerling trout deliberately exposed to the water survived over the weekend.

As a precaution, state and federal officials along the river system have ordered public water systems to turn off intake valves as the plume passes. Boaters and fishing groups have been told to avoid affected stretches of the Animas and San Juan rivers, which are crowded with rafters and anglers in a normal summer.

Recreational businesses along the rivers said they were losing thousands of dollars.

"We had lots of trips booked. Right now we're just cancelling by the day," said Drew Beezley, co-owner of 4 Corners Whitewater in Durango, Colorado.



A jar of water from a ditch is brought in for testing at San Juan County's Lee Acres Sheriff's substation in Farmington, N.M., on Monday, Aug. 10, 2015. A crew supervised by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has been blamed for causing a wastewater spill while attempting to clean up the area near an abandoned mine in Colorado. Water laced with heavy metals, including lead and arsenic, reached the New Mexico municipalities of Aztec, Farmington and Kirtland over the weekend. (Alexa Rogals/The Daily Times via AP) MANDATORY CREDIT

He said his company has had to cancel 20 rafting trips so far, and his dozen employees are out of work until the river is deemed safe to enter again.

"We don't really know what the future holds yet," said Beezley, who estimates that he's lost about \$10,000 worth of business since the spill last week. "We don't know if the rest of this season is just scrapped."

The EPA has considered adding a section of the Animas River in Colorado as a Superfund cleanup site at least since the 1990s because heavy metals from Gold King and other defunct mines were killing fish and other species.

The designation would have brought federal clean-up funds, but some in Colorado opposed the move in part because of the stigma attached. The EPA agreed to allow local officials to lead clean-up efforts instead.

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Knickmeyer reported from San Francisco. AP writers Lindsay Whitehurst in Salt Lake City, Ivan Moreno and Thomas Peipert in Denver, and Susan Montoya Bryan in Albuquerque, New Mexico, contributed to this story.

By Susan Montoya Bryan And Ellen Knickmeyer, The Associated Press

# EPA May Be Liable for Losses in Colorado Mine Spill

Mark Drajem

August 10, 2015 — 2:58 PM CDT

Updated on August 10, 2015 — 5:17 PM CDT



Water flows into pits of mine wastewater below the Gold King Mine, on August 7, 2015. Photographer: Brent Lewis/The Denver Post via Getty Images

The Environmental Protection Agency and its contractors may have to pay millions of dollars in damages after mistakenly releasing toxic sludge that tainted a Colorado river, preventing its use by ranchers and residents.

Mustard-colored water continued to leak Monday from the long-abandoned Gold King Mine in Silverton, Colorado, and into the Animas River, after the EPA said it “unexpectedly triggered” a Aug. 5 blowout. The agency set up a claims process for losses from the 3 million gallons that leaked, three times more than initially estimated.

While the Clean Water Act and environmental rules often exempt federal agencies and clean-up personnel from legal liability, such protections are voided for negligence, or if the clean-up crew triggers a new pollution release.

“It’s certainly a black eye for the EPA,” said Thaddeus Lightfoot, a partner at Dorsey & Whitney in Minneapolis who often represents industry clients facing action by the agency. “If EPA causes this kind of release, they need to be held responsible, just as a private party would be.”

Acidic water burst from the mine as EPA officials dug open the mine portal to investigate the build up of contamination at Gold King. Data released by the agency showed the water contained elevated levels of lead, arsenic and magnesium, all harmful to humans and the environment. The river flows south and into the San Juan River in New Mexico and eventually to Lake Powell.

## Navajo Emergency

Federal, state and local officials closed the Animas and San Juan rivers to fishing and boating, and barred water withdrawals for ranching or residential use. The rivers will be closed until at least Aug. 17, local EPA Administrator Shaun McGrath said Monday.

"We'll have an independent investigation to find out what happened," McGrath said on a conference call. "We'll be taking steps in the future to make sure this doesn't happen again."

Some water systems on the Navajo Nation, which is south of Colorado, shut intake systems on the San Juan River, according to the Associated Press. Navajo President Russell Begaye said the tribe is frustrated with the EPA, and he threatened to take legal action, AP reported.

## Toxic Chemicals

The EPA, through its Superfund program, has investigated the toxic chemicals in water and soil around abandoned mines near Silverton, in the mountains of southwest Colorado. Water quality has worsened in the Animas River since 2008, with higher levels of heavy metals that make it toxic to most trout.

Costs for such river contamination can exceed \$100 million in U.S. fines and remediation.

After a Duke Energy Corp. coal-disposal pond sprung a leak and contaminated North Carolina's Dan River last year, the company pleaded guilty and agreed to spend \$34 million on river and wetlands projects nearby and pay a \$68 million criminal fine.

In Colorado, the EPA was preparing to install a drainage pipe from the Gold King Mine, as part of a project to cap a nearby mine. Of about 200 mines, local environmental groups identified about 30 that need work, said Peter Butler, a co-coordinator of the Animas River Stakeholders Group.

"They made some mistakes," Butler said of the EPA. "It would have behooved them to talk to more people before they got in there."

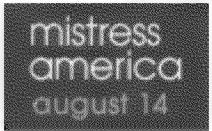
## Claims Process

EPA has apologized and said businesses or residents facing personal injury or property damage could file a claim for "damage caused by U.S. government actions."

"Although EPA's regulations state that the EPA has six months to resolve a claim, the agency will make every effort to respond to Gold King Mine spill claims as soon as possible," the agency said on its website.

Following the spill, the local sheriff's office on Aug. 6 closed the river to swimming, kayaking and rafting. EPA advised downriver farmers and cities to close water intakes, and some officials said a lack of irrigation water could cause hardships.

McGrath said the initial increase in levels of metals and sediment in the water appeared to be waning, but it was unclear how long it would be until the river returned to its pre-blowout level of cleanliness.



**The New York Times** | <http://nyti.ms/1lyqa2O>

U.S.

# Environmental Agency Uncorks Its Own Toxic Water Spill at Colorado Mine

By JULIE TURKEWITZ AUG. 10, 2015

DURANGO, Colo. — The Animas River is the cultural soul of this patch of southwestern Colorado, a sort of moving Main Street that hosts multiple floating parades a year and is typically bustling with rafters and kayakers. Schoolchildren study the river. Sweethearts marry on its banks. Its former name, given by Spaniards, is el Río de las Ánimas, the River of Souls.

But since Wednesday, the Animas has been grievously polluted with toxic water spilled from one of the many abandoned mines that pockmark the region — a spill for which the Environmental Protection Agency has claimed responsibility, saying it accidentally breached a store of chemical-laced water.

On Sunday, anger over the spill boiled over after the agency announced that the amount of toxic water released was three times what was previously stated — more than three million gallons rather than one million — and that officials were still unsure if there was a health threat to humans or animals.

The day of that announcement, State Senator Ellen Roberts, a Republican who lives near the river, cried softly as she considered the pollution, adding that she had dropped her father's ashes in the depths of the river, which pollutants had turned into an unnatural-looking yellow-

orange ribbon.

"It is not just a scenic destination," Ms. Roberts said. "It is where people literally raise their children. It is where the farmers and ranchers feed their livestock, which in turn feeds the people. We're isolated from Denver through the mountains, and we are pretty resourceful people. But if you take away our water supply, we're left with virtually no way to move forward."

On Monday, Gov. John W. Hickenlooper released \$500,000 in funds for assistance. The City of Durango and La Plata County have declared states of emergency.

Soon after the spill was detected, city officials stopped pumping water from the Animas into the reservoir that provides drinking water for Durango's 17,000 residents — taking action swiftly enough that the contamination did not reach the drinking supply. The reservoir still receives water from the Florida River, a tributary of the Animas, but the city has asked local residents to conserve so that the reservoir does not get too low.

Most people living outside the city use wells, and officials say about 1,000 residential water wells could be contaminated.

The river is closed indefinitely, and the county sheriff has hastily recast his campaign signs into posters warning river visitors to stay out of the water. The yellow plume has traveled down to New Mexico — where officials in several municipalities have stopped pumping river water into drinking water systems, fearing contamination — and to the Navajo Nation.

Testing by the E.P.A. — an agency typically in the position of responding to toxic disasters, not causing them — found that the wastewater spill caused levels of arsenic, lead and other metals to spike in the Animas River.

On the day of the accident, a team from the agency had been investigating an abandoned mine about 50 miles north of here. Called the

Gold King, it is roughly 1.5 miles long and about 700 feet tall at its highest point. The mine had been abandoned for nearly a century, but between roughly 1890 and 1920 it produced 350,000 ounces of high-grade gold, according to its owner.

For years, the Gold King has leaked toxic water at a rate of 50 to 250 gallons a minute. The agency had planned to find the source of the leak in the hope of one day stanching it. Instead, as workers used a backhoe to hack at loose material, a surprise deluge of orange water ripped through, spilling into Cement Creek and flowing into the Animas. The burst did not injure workers.

In his first interview since the spill, the owner of the mine, Todd Hennis, said the spill was probably the fault of another mine company — the Sunnyside Gold Corporation — that had built retention walls inside an abandoned mine near the Gold King, part of an old cleanup agreement with the federal government. Once the Sunnyside mine filled with wastewater, the water probably spilled into the Gold King, and then into the Animas, Mr. Hennis said.

He urged Sunnyside's parent company, the Kinross Gold Corporation, to clean up the mess. "They've got to step forward and be responsible," he said of Kinross. A spokesman for Sunnyside, Larry Perino, said the company had no role in Gold King spill.

Since the 1870s, metal mining has both enriched and poisoned this region, turning the earth under portions of southwest Colorado into a maze of tunnels and leaving behind shuttered sites oozing with chemicals. There are about 200 abandoned mines in the Animas watershed. Sunnyside was the last to close, in 1991.

On Sunday night, residents packed a school auditorium in Durango for a meeting with the E.P.A.'s regional director, Shaun McGrath. During a public comment session that lasted more than two hours, residents flouted a

sign on the wall that instructed the auditorium's typical patrons — middle schoolers — to refrain from calling out, jumping up or insulting others during assemblies.

Shouts rang out. A few people cried. One resident questioned whether the agency had refashioned itself into the "Environmental Pollution Agency." Others demanded to know what would happen to wildlife, livestock, water wells, sediment and river-based jobs.

"When — when can we be open again?" asked David Moler, 35, the owner of a river-rafting company who had approached a microphone. "All I hear is a handful of 'gonna-dos,'" he added. "What should I tell my employees?"

Mr. McGrath and his colleagues urged patience and assured residents that they would provide information about health risks once they had it. The agency, he said, is awaiting test results to determine whether the water poses a risk.

"We're going to continue to work until this is cleaned up," Mr. McGrath said, "and hold ourselves to the same standards that we would anyone that would have created this situation."

A version of this article appears in print on August 11, 2015, on page A12 of the New York edition with the headline: Environmental Agency Uncorks Its Own Toxic Spill .

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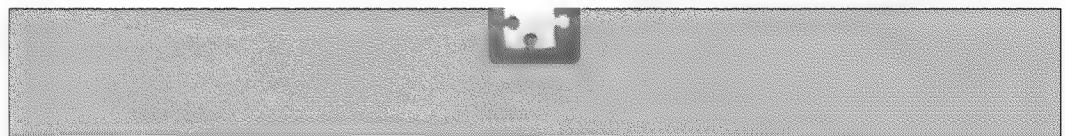
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By Mike Berger  
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## Frustrations grow at EPA town hall on Animas River spill

Everything You Need to Know: Animas River contamination following EPA spill

UPDATED 7:51 AM MDT Aug 11, 2015

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FARMINGTON, N.M. — Nearly 3 million gallons of contaminated wastewater from Colorado's Gold King mine has made its way into the Animas River since an EPA mistake last week.

The wastewater began spilling last Wednesday when an EPA-supervised cleanup crew accidentally breached a debris dam that was flowing at 550 gallons per minute.

The spill turned the river into an orange, mucky mess for several days as the plume made its way downstream.

Five days after the spill, southern Colorado and northwestern New Mexico residents continue to avoid the river.

#### Frustrations grow at EPA town hall

Those affected most by the millions of gallons of waste accidentally dumped into the Animas River by an Environmental Protection Agency crew, sounded off at a town hall meeting in Farmington

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Monday night.

The plume hit San Juan County, has now dumped into the San Juan River and is moving into Utah toward Lake Powell, a popular tourist destination.

Aztec and Farmington shut off their intake valves to the river because of the spill and both have now tapped into their water reserves. At the town hall meeting, San Juan County officials asked people to be mindful about conserving water.

Test samples from the waste at the mine showed high levels of hazardous metals like lead and arsenic.

State officials and EPA engineers are waiting on test samples from river water in New Mexico to see if those levels stayed high after the plume thinned out. When they're released, officials will have a better idea of when things might be back to normal.

Until then, farmers can't use the river for crops or livestock and people living off of private wells have no water.

While water is being made available to those people, many of them told us on Monday that the spill is devastating their livelihood.

"The EPA is out of control," farmer Bill Scott said. "I grow alfalfa and sell beef and this is just devastating to farmers, and we're getting little information about the river right now."

Mack McVickers lives on a private well and told us he has to drive from Aztec to Farmington to take a shower every day at a friend's house.

"I'm concerned about my health in the long term, but I can't bathe, can't get any water for my dog, it's inconvenient," McVicker said.

McVicker and many others who attended the meeting wanted to know when the inconvenience will end.

That question couldn't be answered by EPA officials.

#### Water testing at wells in northwest New Mexico



SHOW TRANSCRIPT

More than 1,000 wells in San Juan County could be impacted by the spill.

People came out in droves to find out if their water was safe to drink. So far, more than 200 people have brought water in to be tested.

Some of the water samples will be taken off to a lab for further testing, and it may take at

least a week for those results to come back.

"I mean this is our life blood," Aztec resident Bill Peterson said. "You can bet it's a serious situation."

The county has declared a state of emergency. In the meantime, people living within one-and-a-half miles of the river are being asked to get their water tested and take precautions.

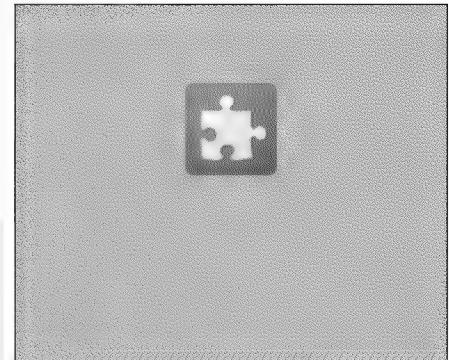
"Avoid showering, drinking, any type of bodily contact with that water. Don't let the livestock drink it," said Jack King, with the New Mexico Environment Department.

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The county is asking people to cut back on their water consumption until it gets the all clear from the EPA.

State officials and the EPA tested both the Animas and San Juan rivers before the plume reached the area, so they can see exactly how the contaminated water affected them.

#### Resources and information for residents

Two potable water stations have been established in Farmington. They are located at these locations:

--Farmington Fire Station No. 6, 3101 W. Main St.

--Sycamore Park Community Center, 1051 Sycamore St.

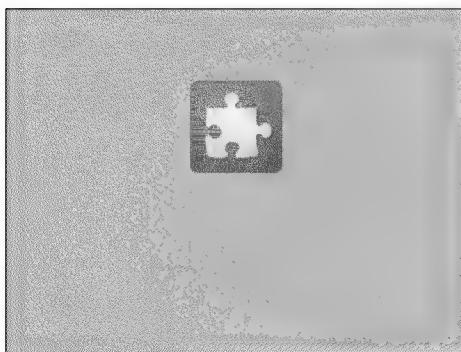
The hours for the stations will be from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., beginning Sunday until further notice.

Residents should bring their own water containers to fill. Large tanks are not permitted.

City officials reminded residents that city water remains safe to drink.

The state has also created a website with the latest information on the spill and water well monitoring information. [CLICK HERE](#) to visit that site.

#### State of emergency declared



New Mexico Gov. Susana Martinez declared a state of emergency due to the contamination.

The declaration will make the state and its residents eligible for federal funds to help deal with the fallout.

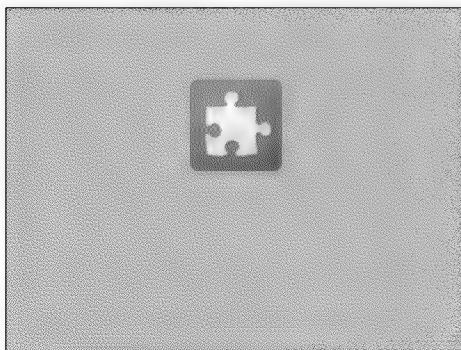
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"I had the chance to see the spill with my own eyes. It is absolutely devastating, and I am heartbroken by this environmental catastrophe," Martinez said. "As I've said before, I am very concerned by EPA's lack of communication and inability to provide accurate information. One day, the spill is 1 million gallons. The next, it's 3 million. New Mexicans deserve answers we can rely on."

Martinez was also critical of how long it took the EPA to notify citizens. She said 24 hours was too long, and it's going to be costly to clean up and for those who rely on that river to make a living.

"This would have allowed farmers to get ahead of what was happening more quickly, water their fields, water their cattle, get clean water, whatever they needed from the Animas River before it was too late, but it didn't happen," Martinez said.

#### Latest from the EPA



EPA staffers told Action 7 News the river will be closed for at least another week.

They do not know how many people are impacted, but said five water supply systems in New Mexico are affected.

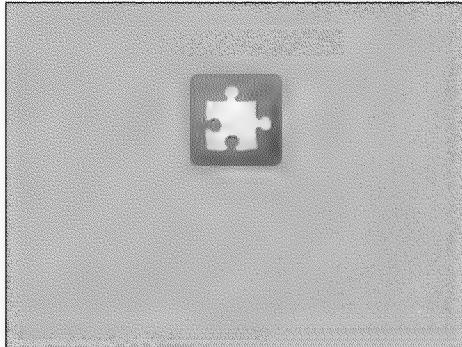
The EPA said they have been constantly testing and screening the water. Agency

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staffers also said there will be an independent investigation into the spill.

A lot of folks are worried about livestock and crops in the heat of the summer.

#### Potential for other issues with mines

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The Gold King Mine is just one of thousands filled with the same contaminated water.

Experts estimate that there are 55,000 abandoned mines across the west, and federal and state authorities have struggled for decades to clean them up.

What happened in this instance is part of the reason for the struggle. Accidents can cause

lots of damage and be very expensive.

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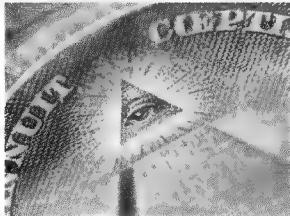
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Jack Bauer • 14 hours ago

I wonder if the tree hugging professional protestors are gonna come March against this colossal mishap that was caused by their beloved EPA.

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Sky Blue Eyes • 15 hours ago

What a mess! I wonder what "new changes" the EPA will instill after this mess :( Sorry, too little, too late!! WHY CAN'T WE EVER BE PROACTIVE?!?!?!?!

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William H Bonney &gt; Sky Blue Eyes • 14 hours ago

I'm no expert, but it seems like the whole reason this happened was because of being proactive. But when all you want to do is be heard, any excuse makes sense huh?

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Gerry Atrick &gt; William H Bonney • 14 hours ago

Being proactive doesn't negate the necessity for doing it safely and correctly.

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whiskeyriver &gt; Gerry Atrick • 3 hours ago

The EPA doing something "safely and correctly"? A bloated, useless, incompetent gooberment agency? Are you kidding me?

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William H Bonney &gt; Gerry Atrick • 14 hours ago

Really? Wow, you should like, run for head of APD or some sh\*t.

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Gerry Atrick &gt; William H Bonney • 14 hours ago

It would be easy to get away with anything with you around. I just need to hire contractors and blame them for the failures.

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Gerry Atrick &gt; William H Bonney • 14 hours ago

I grow tired of proving how much of a liar you are.

1 △ | ▽ • Reply • Share ▾



This comment is awaiting moderation. Show comment.

Gerry Atrick &gt; William H Bonney • 14 hours ago

I just did in the other post. i have 2 confirmed positive identifiers that you did. Your a tourist. a troll. an ineffective little liar.

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Gerry Atrick • 16 hours ago

Why not start now to get the money needed to clean up this mess. My thought is that the EPA has no idea on the impact and are still scrambling to understand it.

1 △ | ▽ • Reply • Share ▾

whiskeyriver > GerryAtrick • 3 hours ago

The Obummer administration has to borrow the money from China before the states affected can get any.

1 △ | ▽ • Reply • Share >

KunoichiWarrior > whiskeyriver • an hour ago

Sure, blame Obama. That is the go-to response of repubitards.

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Gerry Atrick > William H Bonney • 14 hours ago

I haven't guessed. every thing you have posted to prove me wrong, only shows how correct i am.

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William H Bonney > GerryAtrick • 14 hours ago

It actually proves just how wrong and desperate you are, but keep telling those lies if it makes you sleep better at night. You claimed no contractors were involved, remember?

△ | ▽ • Reply • Share >

Gerry Atrick > William H Bonney • 14 hours ago

I never claimed contractors were not involved. I contended that the EPA caused the issue. and I am correct.

1 △ | ▽ • Reply • Share >

William H Bonney > GerryAtrick • 14 hours ago

Your posts tell a different story. Truth works like that.

△ | ▽ • Reply • Share >

Gerry Atrick > William H Bonney • 14 hours ago

Show me where i explicitly stated that contractors were never engaged. I will wait...

△ | ▽ • Reply • Share >



This comment is awaiting moderation. Show comment.

Gerry Atrick > William H Bonney • 14 hours ago

Why not it seems to work for you. You cannot prove it so your the liar. See how that works? You cannot prove it. I never said it. Crying wolf again. Liar. Tourist.

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William H Bonney > GerryAtrick • 14 hours ago

Keep telling yourself that. It won't make it true though. I don;t need to prove it, I'm sick of having to prove things to you idiots. You know what you said, and I know what you said. You're just lying and I'm going to let you dig that hole. It's fun to watch.

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Gerry Atrick > William H Bonney • 13 hours ago

You cannot prove it. Your the liar. -1 integrity to the troll who said the EPA was not responsible even when the EPA admitted they were responsible, and then posted the article that showed them saying they were responsible, Then has the audacity to call out a forum poster as a liar because they contended that the EPA was responsible. Your an ignorant biased little tourist troll.

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William H Bonney > GerryAtrick • 13 hours ago

I didn't say the EPA wasn't responsible and we've covered that once already.

The issue was your contention that contractors were not involved.

[△](#) [▽](#) [• Reply](#) [• Share](#) >

whiskeyriver • 3 hours ago

Most of those old mines have been there for 90 years, or longer, and they have never created a problem for anyone downstream. The only reason the EPA wants to "clean them up" is to justify their bloated budget and all they are really doing is making things worse. This spill is just a more extreme example of their incompetence than what we usually see.

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Coal Isgreat • 11 hours ago

You just cannot leave this type of work for amateurs like the EPA. Their results are disastrous and quite frankly a joke. Another example is the Regional Haze Rule.

Chunky math & science that will destroy jobs & lives in NW New Mexico.

[△](#) [▽](#) [• Reply](#) [• Share](#) >

KunoichiWarrior > Coal Isgreat • an hour ago

If EPA is the amateurs, then who are the professionals? Who should have been doing it instead of the epa? Curious...

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William H Bonney • 13 hours ago

Just thought I'd drop this in here for the Obamahaters.

*"Experts estimate that there are 55,000 abandoned mines across the west, and federal and state authorities have struggled for decades to clean them up."*

[△](#) [▽](#) [• Reply](#) [• Share](#) >

Mark McKee • 14 hours ago

And, per usual, nary a mention of the actual company that abandoned the mine in the first place, very likely a major donor to Tejana's campaign war chest. And since, in this isolated case, the EPA caused the spill, the repubs are reprising their role as situational environmentalists. Nice...

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William H Bonney > Mark McKee • 14 hours ago

The mine has been inactive since 1923, I know she's an old bag, but.....  
1923.

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RAIDERNATION505 • 16 hours ago

Missouri declares one so Susana has to call one to feel important!!

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Sky Blue Eyes > RAIDERNATION505 • 15 hours ago

Or maybe our water supply is contaminated and it just fell on a day that another state felt the need to also declare a state of emergency.

This is NOT funny, how much damage to our environment has already happened and how much worse will it get?

2 [△](#) [▽](#) [• Reply](#) [• Share](#) >

newsball > RAIDERNATION505 • 15 hours ago

are you really that dense, that's she's doing this just to bring attention to herself, and oh yeah just a few hours earlier hickenlooper also declared a disaster emergency allocating a half of million dollars for clean-up, gee are you going to take shots ta him as well, oh wait he's a democrat so he can do it

1 [△](#) [▽](#) [• Reply](#) [• Share](#) >

RAIDERNATION505 > newsball • 15 hours ago

She should have did it when it happened! But it took Missouri to do it for

[ONE CLOUD NEVER GOT IT WHEN IT HAPPENED](#) | [BUT IT TOOK 24 HOURS TO DO IT!](#)

her to think of it!

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Sky Blue Eyes &gt; RAIDERNATION505 • 15 hours ago

The problem with your comment is that the EPA hasn't been very forthcoming with this. Instead of blaming the governor, place blame directly where it lies.

[2 △](#) [▽](#) [• Reply](#) [• Share](#) >

Gerry Atrick &gt; SkyBlue Eyes • 14 hours ago

They haven't been forthcoming. First it is a million, and then it is 3 million. First it is this won't have any effect to the local wildlife, to don't step into the river. They are inept and it reflects poorly on this administration.

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Gerry Atrick &gt; William H Bonney • 14 hours ago

It shows how unprepared and how inept they are. They have no idea about how much was released. Or what it's impact is. you keep calling my integrity into question like there is any reason for me to defend it. The inane buzzing of your protests are not enough to make me feel the need to defend your ignorant statements. You seem to be the only one who takes issue, you seem to be the only one left defending their ineffectiveness and ineptitude. You like that last poor conservative republican trying to defend Bush on his Iraq policy. Good day sir.

[2 △](#) [▽](#) [• Reply](#) [• Share](#) >

William H Bonney &gt; GerryAtrick • 14 hours ago

The stupidity of your comments is comical, and again, hopefully some day you can look back on them and realize that. I'm not defending anything, I'm simply calling you out for the many falsehoods and outright lies you're telling, like always.

[△](#) [▽](#) [• Reply](#) [• Share](#) >

RAIDERNATION505 &gt; SkyBlue Eyes • 15 hours ago

She is always to blame

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Sky Blue Eyes &gt; RAIDERNATION505 • 14 hours ago

Wow, what a well thought out answer.

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William H Bonney &gt; SkyBlue Eyes • 14 hours ago

Almost as well thought out as blaming the EPA huh?

[△](#) [▽](#) [• Reply](#) [• Share](#) >

Sky Blue Eyes &gt; William H Bonney • 11 hours ago

Did you read the part where the EPA took responsibility? That sounds eerily like taking the blame doesn't it?

[△](#) [▽](#) [• Reply](#) [• Share](#) >

William H Bonney &gt; SkyBlue Eyes • 14 hours ago

I think they've been about as forthcoming as they probably could be myself, but then again, I'm apparently better at doing my own research than you and the older geezer.

[△](#) [▽](#) [• Reply](#) [• Share](#) >

Sky Blue Eyes &gt; William H Bonney • 14 hours ago

Right....waiting 24 hours to notify anyone of the pending danger of millions ( something else they haven't been forthcoming with,

just how MUCH has been spilled) of gallons of this waste into our water supply, was very forthcoming.

Ummmm....what "research" are you performing for this article?

1 △ ▽ • Reply • Share >

William H Bonney > SkyBlue Eyes • 14 hours ago

You keep using the term "our" water supply Badge Bunny, it's not YOUR water supply, try to remember that.

Every day I'm reminded why the entire state has become such a cesspool. This thread would be a perfect example of why the entire state has gone down the cr\*pper. Unbelievable.

△ ▽ • Reply • Share >

Sky Blue Eyes > William H Bonney • an hour ago

How is this not issue NOT my problem? I'm living in New Mexico and I drink the water. Not only that, but the latest reports state that at least five other water systems are affected. How in the hell can you say with any confidence that this spill (which caused MY state to be in a disaster status) isn't affecting MY water?

△ ▽ • Reply • Share >

RAIDERNATION505 > newsball • 15 hours ago

You got it right!! He can and she can't!

1 △ ▽ • Reply • Share >

Jack • 16 hours ago

Just in time. Geez.

△ ▽ • Reply • Share >

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# Outrage grows over EPA's contamination of Western rivers

AUGUST 11, 2015, 7:10 AM | Colorado's governor will visit Tuesday to assess the damage from the Gold King Mine spill. The Animas and San Juan Rivers in Colorado and New Mexico are under states of emergency. The Environmental Protection Agency accidentally triggered the massive spill last week. Mireya Villarreal reports from Farmington

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# Colorado EPA spill: 'We looked at the river and we cried'

POSTED 9:00 AM, AUGUST 11, 2015, BY CNN WIRE, UPDATED AT 09:10AM, AUGUST 11, 2015

PHOTO GALLERY



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DURANGO, Co.—From his backyard in, Tom Bartles can see the Animas River, which was stained an unnatural orange.

The Environmental Protection Agency accidentally released millions of gallons of pollutants into the water last week, turning the typically blue water to the color of mustard.

"Everybody in town knew it was coming. It was hard to wake up in the morning and see an orange river," Bartles told CNN. "Many of the locals in this region are probably going to experience a certain level of mourning."

By Tuesday, the plume of heavy metals had largely cleared. You wouldn't notice anything was off, but a local who

And for him, the biggest concern wasn't the immediate impact, but the cumulative impact.

"This is a major, major problem," said Jonathan

Typically it takes years or even decades for the

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clear. A tourist probably said.

Bill's potential long-term and

University of Louisville.

stop.



'We all share this crisis'

Officials said they believe the spill carried metals like iron, zinc and copper into a creek that feeds into the Animas.

It caused a spike in concentrations of total and dissolved metals in the water, the EPA said. It's unclear exactly what effect that will have.

"It's all questions at this point and very few answers," said Bartles, who described the Animas as the "heartbeat of the community."

A lot of people depend on the river for water, recreation, fishing and farming—not just in Durango, but up and down the waterway.

"We all share this crisis no matter where we live," said Bartles. "And we all have to take responsibility."

### Moving downstream

In neighboring New Mexico, the heartbreak of the spill was just as real as the toxic mix moved on.

"We came out here together, and we looked at the river and we cried," Rosemary Hart told CNN affiliate KRQE.

She lives on the Animas and her family depends on a well to get water. The spill has made the water unusable, she said.

"My first concern is the next generations, and what they're walking into," Hart told KRQE.

The U.S. Geological Survey reported the size of the spill to be more than 3 million gallons, compared with the initial EPA estimate of 1 million gallons.

Gov. Susana Martinez has declared a state of emergency.

According to the EPA, the spill occurred when one of its teams was using heavy equipment to enter the Gold King Mine, a suspended mine north of Durango. Instead of entering the mine and beginning the process of pumping and treating the contaminated water inside as planned, the team accidentally caused it to flow into the nearby Animas.

Getting answers from the EPA is critical, according to Doris Stock, who lives along the river.

"We could lose our animals. It could damage our crops. It'll destroy the soil," she told KRQE.

### Few answers

Residents are looking for answers, but the EPA has few to offer at this point.

More than 300 people attended an informational meeting at the Farmington, New Mexico, Civic Center on Monday night.

"Over the next few days, the waters in the river are going to clear up," said Jeff Witte, New Mexico's agriculture secretary. "That's doesn't mean they're safe folks."

Mark Hayes of the EPA reminded residents not to use the water until they get an all clear. When that will be, officials don't know.

## The dangers

According to the EPA, last Wednesday's spill caused a spike in metal concentrations, but levels "began to return to pre-event conditions" by Thursday.

However, according to the EPA's own data, there were still very high levels of metals on Thursday. An arsenic sample tested 26 times higher than the EPA acceptable level.

Lead was even worse—much worse.

"Oh my God! Look at the lead!" said Joseph Landolph, a toxicologist at the University of Southern California, pointing to a lead level in the Animas River nearly 12,000 times higher than the acceptable level set by the EPA.

And one thing is for sure: these metals don't disappear. Even if they go down to low levels in the water, they will likely be in the sediment and could be kicked up into the water at any time.

"This was such a horrible accident," Landolph said. "I served on the EPA scientific advisory board, and I have the utmost respect for the agency. I wish them Godspeed in cleaning it up and containing it."

'We'll weather it'

Among those most hurting from the spill are businesses that depend on the Animas day to day.

Andy Corra is an owner of the Durango-based 4Corners Riversports, which has a sister company called 4Corners Whitewater.

"The river is basically closed so that shuts down all the rafting," he said. "They're losing all their revenue."

On good days, he said, that could be as much as \$10,000 a day.

"One day business is booming, and the next day, boom, it's shut off," said Corra. "It's a huge bummer for the whole industry."

He's been in Durango for 35 years and loves it. He called the city a paradise and, without exaggeration, the greatest place in the world.

"We'll weather it. There's a bigger concern for the river, but the river will weather it as well," said Corra.

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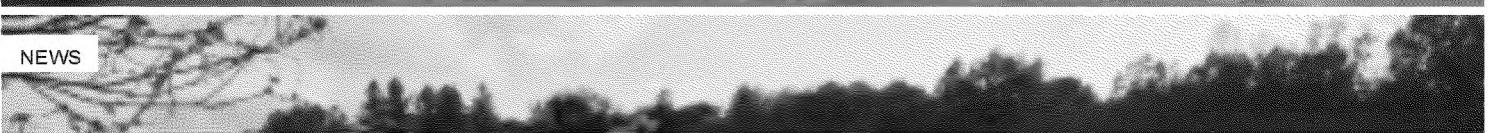
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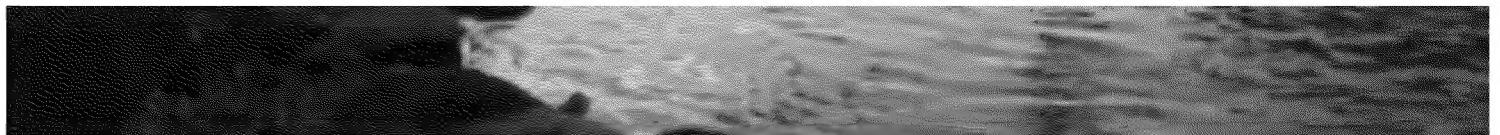




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